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ABSTRACT

If schools are to play the role of integrators of human services, state and local policymakers must create a favorable policy context in which schools may operate. Six critical policy issues are discussed: ensuring comprehensive service delivery to children and families; developing alternative funding strategies; ensuring family support; ensuring personnel quality; providing leadership in the development of a broad support base; and providing leadership in interagency collaboration. The efforts of five southwestern states--Arkansas, Louisiana, New Mexico, Oklahoma, and Texas--to create supportive contexts for coordinated service delivery are highlighted. A chart of selected programs in the above states is included. (4 references) (LMI)

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INSIGHTS ON EDUCATIONAL POLICY AND PRACTICE
Number 23
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# School-Linked Services: So that Schools Can Educate and Children Can Learn
## Part 3

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INSIGHTS ON EDUCATIONAL POLICY AND PRACTICE

Number 23 September 1990

# School-Linked Services: So that Schools Can Educate and Children Can Learn Part 3

*The impetus for linking health, social, and juvenile services with schools has increased as more children need them. The May issue of INSIGHTS, No. 20 presented a rationale for local schools serving as "integrators" of non-instructional services: (1) a strong relationship exists between the elements of a child's basic well-being—nutrition, clothing, shelter, health, and care—and school achievement; (2) the school is the institution that reaches most children and their families or caregivers; and (3) school personnel need relief from the assumption of roles and duties that may be needed, but for which they have not been trained.*

*If schools are to play the role of integrators of services, state and local policymakers need to create a policy context in which successful linkage programs may exist. Issue No. 22 discussed the following critical policy issues: (1) ensuring comprehensive service delivery to children and families; (2) developing alternative funding strategies; (3) ensuring family support; (4) ensuring the quality of personnel; (5) providing leadership in developing a broad base of local support; and (6) providing leadership in interagency collaborations. During the past year, SEDL has identified policymakers, educators, and human service professionals in the Southwest Region who are creating contexts that enable coordinated service delivery efforts to exist. This issue highlights some of their efforts relative to those six policy issues.*

## Ensuring comprehensive service delivery to children and families

Because conditions that create risk factors are interrelated, children and members of their families may need a range of services to help them in their day-to-day living. "The needs of kids, as well as the families they live in, have never been so complex. A typical home may have any of several social problems—teen pregnancy, crime, mental health, or substance abuse," explains Ray Bitsche, director of the *Oklahoma County Coalition of Citizens and Professionals for Youth.*

Given the funding patterns and eligibility criteria in many agencies, however, the provision of an array of services to a single family can result in fragmented or duplicated services to the family. For example, an Arkansas school superintendent describes a family of six in his district that was served by 25 human services professionals. Successful programs coordinate service delivery among agencies to reduce fragmentation and duplication of services and the sheer numbers of people with whom a family must contend. "These programs have put previously disparate services together and have added missing pieces to enable the front-line worker—be it nurse home visitor, school counselor or a welfare agency case manager—to respond to a family's or child's untidy collection of real world troubles" (Schorr, 1989, p. 83).

Policymakers can create the mechanisms that "enable the front-line worker" to respond effectively. One mechanism is to promote coalitions consisting of heads of service agencies, school principals, and interested community members to assess their needs and coordinate service delivery. Members of the Oklahoma County Coalition, who represent education, social services, juvenile justice, mental health, medicine, and law enforcement, meet once a month to generate strategies for addressing these interrelated needs. The Coalition has sponsored legislation affecting school truancy laws, the sharing of confidential information among service providers, the development of family support centers, the formation of a youth advisory council, and the establishment of a referral center for students identified as truant during school hours.

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State and local agency decision makers can also create mechanisms to provide the flexibility and discretion required for comprehensive service delivery. Agencies can enhance flexibility by applying waivers to allow funds or services to be delivered in a comprehensive way. "We need to write regulations and policies so that they are more flexible, and more importantly, that they are developed jointly so conflicts in terms and purposes are resolved," said Richard Thompson, director of the Bureau of Student Services at the Louisiana State Department of Education.

**Developing alternative funding strategies**

Categorical funding belies comprehensiveness; it fragments monies, other resources, and services so that a local service provider is unlikely to be able to draw together all the resources to serve a family successfully. One strategy is to reorganize existing funding patterns. Lisbeth Schorr (1989) proposes the development of geographically defined or neighborhood-targeted "flexible superfunds," to address the multiple needs of families at-risk. Such funds, which might be supplemented by contributions from the private sector, would have waivers on the public portion of the funds so that they might be more easily used in a non-categorical way. This comprehensive approach is designed to minimize problems of access, take advantage of the influence of neighborhoods, and reduce many of the administrative problems inherent in serving large numbers of people.

Even with the promise of more flexible public funding strategies, policymakers need to encourage members of the private sector to share in the support of school-linked or cooperative service delivery programs. Sharing responsibility for shared service delivery between the private and public sectors can extend ownership for such programs, remove barriers between them, and create a seamless web of support for children and families who need assistance. Private foundations such as the Danforth, Annie E. Casey, and Hogg Foundation for Mental Health have made substantial commitments to the practice of school-linked service delivery.

One way to weave funding strands from the public and private sectors is to use federal and state monies in cost-sharing agreements with private foundations or corporations. Funds from most federal programs, such as Job Training Partnership Act (JTPA) or Medicaid, can be used only for eligible participants; however, such public funds can be used to leverage supplemental funds and in-kind contributions from the private sector.

A final strategy, exemplified by the *Cities in Schools (CIS)* model, is to establish a special cooperative arrangement in which staff members from existing human service agencies or volunteer organizations are "repositioned" at schools or alternative education sites. This strategy avoids the need for a major infusion of new money, drawing together existing resources and professionals so that participating students can have access to them at a single site. This comprehensive approach has been used successfully for the *Burger King Academy* in San Antonio, the *Foley's Academy* in Houston, and in Texas' *Communities in Schools* projects across the state to provide at-risk students with alternative educational environments where teachers, professional social service staff, and volunteers work together.

**Ensuring family support**

"We must build, create, or manipulate the environment in such a way to provide a support system for youth," voices Don Wydra, Louisiana Assistant Secretary, Office of Juvenile Services. Among the social systems surrounding youths—family, schools, and agencies—the basic support system is the family. For it to function supportively for a youngster in school, the family itself may require additional assistance.

With the passage of the Family Support Act of 1988 social welfare policy has focused on helping families become self-sufficient. The philosophy underlying the Family Support Act is that:

- Parents have an obligation to support their children.
- If they are unable to do that, they have an obligation to take steps to ready themselves to

support their children.

- Government has an obligation to help people while they're getting ready (Appalachia Educational Laboratory, 1989, p. PPC-2).

An important part of self-sufficiency is self-determination; family members must be able not only to determine their needs, but to plan how they will meet those needs. Children and their families need to be active participants in accepting and fulfilling responsibilities to achieve self-sufficiency.

Policymakers and practitioners can profit from the lessons learned about family participation in programs such as Head Start and the Handicapped Children's Early Education Program. For example, they might examine the concept of individualized family service plans (IFSPs) for possible adaptation. Mandated by Public Law 99-457, Education for the Handicapped Act Amendments of 1986, IFSPs are developed by a team of qualified professionals and the family of a handicapped child, from birth to three years old. The plans include specific provisions for assessing the needs of the child and the family and determining the family's goals and strategies for meeting their needs; often family members need to develop certain skills to support the child (Jordan, Gallagher, Hutinger, & Karnes, 1988).

An adaptation of the IFSP might include an assessment of the family's multiple needs, goals and strategies, a description of the services provided to the family, and a schedule of outcomes. Levitan, Mangum, and Pines (1989) also recommend inclusion of a "hierarchy of consequences," which might range from incentives for fathers to provide child support to sanctions such as a reduction of services to families who renege on their responsibilities.

To implement the provisions of PL99-457, each state in the region has created an interagency coordinating council that serves families with children who have special needs. Oklahoma's *Early Intervention Plan for Children with Special Needs* is an example of a program designed specifically to serve such families through six regional centers that will pool the resources of the State Departments of Education, Health, Mental Health, and Human Services.

In orienting services to improve the self- sufficiency of families who are challenged by poverty, programs such as the *Early Childhood and Family Education Program (ECFEP)* are designed to empower them to set their own agendas for their lives and their communities. Working in the economically depressed South Broadway community of Albuquerque, ECFEP engages parents in its preschool classrooms, in home visits with other parents, and on its Parent Advisory Board to develop parent education forums, set policy for the preschools, and monitor the ECFEP.

**Ensuring that programs are staffed with qualified personnel**

New models of coordinated service delivery, such as case management, challenge agencies and training institutions to provide trained, qualified personnel. Case management requires the professional to have high interpersonal skills, knowledge of services offered by relevant service agencies, and the ability to help families assess their own needs and "prescription of assistance" (Levitan, Mangum, & Pines, 1989, p. 26).

One method is to use trained professionals and validated procedures from other cooperating agencies. One example is to use "mixed staffing"—where professionals from a health or mental health agency, for example, would regularly deliver services at a school or community agency. *New Futures of Little Rock*, Arkansas, strives to provide students and their families with tailored services by employing trained case managers or medical staff who work in the schools with teachers to provide or broker services.

Another approach to developing the pool of available trained personnel in programs designed to support and serve children is to engage parents as paraprofessionals. The *Home Instruction Program for Preschool Youth (HIPPY)* is an example. Operating across the state of Arkansas and in New

## Selected Programs Linking Schools & Social Services*

| Focus \ State | Arkansas | Louisiana | New Mexico | Oklahoma | Texas |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Special Needs** | •*Interagency Coordinating Council*— Jerri Sue Finch, Chairperson (501) 371-1555 | •*Interagency Coordinating Council*— Rep. Ted Haik, Chairperson (318) 365-5486 | •*Interagency Coordinating Council*— Steve Dossey, Chairperson (505) 827-2573 | •*Early Intervention Plan for Children of Special Needs*— Ann Taylor, Chairperson (405) 521-4016 | •*Interagency Coordinating Council*— Kay Lambert, Member (512) 454-4816 |
| **Pre-School & Kindergarten** | •*HIPPY*— Michelle French, State Director (501) 370-3671 | •*HIPPY*— Michael Honore, Director & Coordinator (504) 483-6448 | •*Early Childhood and Family Education Program*— Maria Chavez, Chairperson (505) 277-6943 | | •*SEDL's Follow-Through*— Betty Mace-Matluck, Program Director (512) 476-6861 |
| **Elementary School** | •*CornerStone*— Dennis Ray Beavers, Director (501) 664-0963<br><br>•*New Futures for Little Rock Youth*— Don Crary, Executive Director (501) 688-8334 | | | •*Oklahoma County Coalition of Citizens and Professionals for Youth*— Ray Bitsche, Executive Director (405) 841-1400 | •*Temple Community Plan for Action*— Judy Hundley, Program Coordinator (817) 778-2781<br>•*Communities in Schools* — Susan Hopkins, State Director (512) 463-0425<br>•*CIS, Corpus Christi* Marty Cook, City Director (512) 854-2565<br>•*Burger King Academy*— Maria Farrington, Executive Director (512) 349-9094<br>•*Foley's Academy*— Bette Grady, Director (713) 751-0904 |
| **Middle School** | | | | | |
| **High School** | | | •*New Futures School of Albuquerque*— Veronica C. Garcia, Principal (505) 883-5680 | | |

*This list is not inclusive. Programs mentioned are referred to in *INSIGHTS* #23.

Orleans, HIPPY employs parent paraprofessionals to help mothers prepare their 4-5 year-old children for school. The paraprofessionals, who are former HIPPY participants, work with the mothers in weekly meetings to help them develop their skills in reading and other areas so that they can teach their children.

**Providing leadership in developing a broad base of local support**

Planning and carrying out local service delivery needs to involve all of the pertinent players—public and private agencies, community organizations, employer and employee associations, and service recipients. "To allay concerns that service integration might usurp authority, eliminate jobs, or trespass on turf, the planning process should identify and respect established interests and generate consensus" (Levitan, Mangum, & Pines, 1989). The *CornerStone Project* in Little Rock is based on the belief that the key to solving the problems of youth and families at-risk is the participation of the entire community. CornerStone develops neighborhood centers where parents, youth, and professionals meet to plan and work together in a variety of programs, including parenting skills, child care, drug and alcohol prevention and treatment, skills training, personal growth and educational enrichment workshops, and preventive health and referral services.

Launched by the *National Collaboration for Youth's (NCY) "Making the Grade"* campaign, the Junior League of the Temple/Belton area in central Texas is striving to establish community-wide involvement and support. Since last fall, the League has sponsored a series of town meetings designed to focus on the conditions and problems of at-risk students in the Temple/Belton area, generate strategies to address these problems, and develop a unified plan of action.

Developing improved outcome measures is another critical step toward garnering broad-based support. "We need tangible, viable outcomes," says John LaCour, Louisiana's Commissioner of Mental Health, "not more meetings or cooperative agreements." Performance outcomes need to be based on the characteristics of the local context, the target population, and the program design. Such measures might include reductions in dropout rates, unemployment, teen pregnancies, welfare dependency, infant mortality; and increases in school attendance, test scores, graduation rates, adult literacy, employment rates. Outcome measures need to be monitored regularly and changed when they become outdated or irrelevant.

**Providing leadership in interagency collaborations**

The role of state policymakers is not to provide a recipe for local coordinated service delivery, says Louisiana's Wydra. Local educators and service providers "must own their problems, their solutions, and make sure the solutions fit their problems." Rather, state policymakers must "build, create, or manipulate the environment in such a way to develop needed support systems." Two means for encouraging interagency collaboration are *intervention*–legislation or regulations—and *incentives*–funding grant programs, granting waivers from regulations, or allowing local site-based decision making, Wydra explains.

State agencies need to provide flexibility, agrees John LaCour, with such changes starting at the top to allow coordination at the grass-roots level. "Right now," says LaCour, "among agencies there is tremendous redundancy; ignorance of other systems, regulations, resources, and language." Consequently, turfism is widespread. However, LaCour concludes, agencies share more similarities than differences—and the greatest is the children they serve. Says Texas's Liz Silbernagle, "In terms of the population there is no turf." In all five states of the region, state policymakers and practitioners are sponsoring legislation, convening task forces, and creating partnerships to change the way service delivery systems work so that schools can educate and all children can learn.

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